

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

1.- 10. (Cancelled)

11. (Previously Presented) A method of collecting a sample of body fluid from a skin layer the method comprising:

providing a sampling tool comprising a needle and a skin stretching member having opposing surfaces at least partially surrounding said needle, wherein said needle and said skin stretching member are independently movable relative to one another along a path substantially parallel to an axis of said needle;

placing said skin stretching member against the skin of a patient with said opposing surfaces at least partially surrounding and defining a fluid collection area;

moving said skin stretching member relative to said needle to stretch a skin layer in the fluid collection area;

moving said needle relative to said skin stretching member thereby inserting said needle into the fluid collection area of the stretched skin layer; and

collecting said sample of body fluid.

12. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 11 wherein said skin stretching member is circular.

13. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 12 further comprising causing body fluid to flow into the fluid collection area.

14. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 11 wherein said skin stretching member comprises a pressure ring.

15. (Previously Presented) A method of collecting a sample of body fluid from skin, the method comprising:

providing a fluid collection device comprising a piston having a distal surface, a needle operatively connected to said piston and having a distal end extending a distance from said distal piston surface, and a pressure surface adjacent said needle, said piston and said pressure surface being

independently movable relative to one another along a path substantially parallel to the axis of said needle;

placing said pressure surface against the skin of a patient to define a fluid collection area

moving said pressure surface relative to said piston thereby stretching skin within the fluid collection area;

moving said piston relative to said pressure surface thereby inserting said needle into the fluid collection area of the skin; and

collecting body fluid.

16. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 15 wherein stretching the skin comprises drawing tight the skin.

17. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 15 further comprising further moving said piston relative to said pressure surface wherein said distal piston surface extends distally beyond said pressure surface.

18. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 11 further comprising placing an absorbent membrane in fluid communication with said needle wherein said collected body fluid is deposited on said absorbent membrane.

19. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 18 further comprising testing said body fluid deposited on said absorbent membrane with light.

20. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 11 further comprising testing said collected body fluid for determining the concentration of at least one constituent.

21. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 15 further comprising testing said collected body fluid for determining the concentration of at least one constituent.

22. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 11 wherein said moving said skin stretching member comprises employing a first spring and said moving said needle comprises

employing a second spring.

23. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 15 wherein said moving said pressure surface comprises employing a first spring and said moving said piston comprises employing a second spring.

24. (Previously Presented) A sampling tool for accessing a sample of body fluid from a skin layer, said sampling tool comprising:

a needle; and

a skin stretching member having opposing surfaces at least partially surrounding said needle, wherein said needle and said skin stretching member are independently movable relative to one another along a path substantially parallel to an axis of said needle.

25. (Previously Presented) The sampling tool of claim 24 wherein said opposing surfaces are configured to at least partially surround the skin layer and to define a fluid collection area when said skin stretching member is operatively placed against the skin of a patient.

26. (Previously Presented) The sampling tool of claim 24 wherein said skin stretching member is circular.

27. (Previously Presented) The sampling tool of claim 24 wherein said skin stretching member comprises a pressure ring.

28. (Previously Presented) The sampling tool of claim 24 further comprising:

a first spring for moving said skin stretching member; and

a second spring for moving said needle.

29. (Previously Presented) A device for accessing a sample of body fluid from skin, the fluid collection device comprising:

a piston having a distal surface;

a needle operatively connected to said piston and having a distal end extending a distance from

said distal piston surface; and

a pressure surface adjacent said needle, said piston and said pressure surface being independently movable relative to one another along a path substantially parallel to the axis of said needle.

30. (Previously Presented) The fluid collection device of claim 29 further comprising an absorbent membrane in fluid communication with said needle.

31. (Currently Amended) The fluid collection device of claim 29 further comprising:
a first spring for moving said ~~skin-stretching member~~ pressure surface; and
a second spring for moving said needle